A Memorial Sermon

on

Dr. Armand J. DeRosset,

Preached in

St. James' Church, Dec. 12th, 1897.

by

Rev. Robert Strange, D. D.

Published by the Vestry.

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Dr. Armand J. DeRosset.

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

The Angel of Death has come again, and brought surcease of labor and pain to this most venerable and beloved of the members of the Parish of St. James. Dr. DeRosset was called to his rest in Paradise last night at 11:30 o'clock; and with profound sorrow and a deep sense of our personal loss, as well as the loss to this Church, we, its Vestry, place on our records this memorial of our revered Senior Warden.

Faithful in all things to the Church, a loyal friend, endowed with a clear mind and sound judgment, these rendered him a power for good, and a wise counsellor to those privileged to his companionship.

He was the foremost member of this Parish in influence and efficiency. In disposition he was genial, in bearing courteous, in dealing just, in benefactions generous.

A few years ago he began to show marked signs of a fatal malady. His bodily suffering

was great, sometimes intense; but through it all he remained calm and brave and gentle. From first to last, we believe, no word of complaint escaped him. He died as he had lived.

Of Dr. DeRosset's life, amid the sacred privacies of his home, filled as it was with all that makes home dear, it is not our privilege to speak; but to his family we respectfully tender the assurance that, while our hearty sympathy goes out to them in their present sorrow, we share also in the consolation that that sorrow is softened by the glorious assurance that, "It is well with him." A life such as his rebukes our grief, renews our faith, and inspires a deeper trust in the wisdom and the goodness of God.

JOHN WILDER ATKINSON,
CLAYTON GILES,
HENRY A. BURR,
Committee for the Vestry.

Adopted by the Vestry at a special meeting held Friday, December 10th, 1897.

Sermon.

Psalm I, 1 2. "*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night.*"

THIS hath been a sadly memorable week in our parish. We have shuddered over the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and we have marvelled at the vivid contrasts presented by this shifting mysterious existence of ours. We have seen the life, so bright and vigorous at the rising sun, wither and die, like the frost struck plant, ere that sun had set; and we have watched the slow and steady decline of physical powers, the gradual decay of one of earth's sturdiest trees.

We have stood shocked and dazed at the little child's sudden call, snatched away to play in Paradise; and we have listened to the aged saint murmuring, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." It seems to me, brethren, that I have caught this week the far faint echoes of those sweet and cheering words spoken by the Saviour's own blessed lips, "Suffer little children

to come unto me," and, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

The lovely boy, opening like a sweet flower in its freshness and fragrance, loving all and believing himself beloved by all, just entering our active church life in the Sunday School, has been transplanted to another field of play and work. For him the joyous life of Paradise will be the school for education and development: he does not need earth's rough and trying training. There will be children—loving, trusting, child-like natures—in Heaven; and God is fitting little Walter for one of those saints who will ever wear the white stone of innocence in their shining crowns.

And now let us think of the veteran soldier who has stood faithfully at his post through all the heat and struggle of the longest day. God in His wisdom, may be, lengthened out his days to show us how a Christian man can stand the joys, the trials and the varying vicissitudes of life. He is the more useful example to us from the fact that he is our very own. DR. ARMAND JOHN DEROSSET, as his father before him, was born in our city. He grew up in our midst, spent the days of active manhood here, and at last passed away under the same roof that had sheltered him in birth and infancy. "He was to

the manner born," his environment, excepting change of time, is our own; and, therefore, we can hope to follow his example, in doing the good he hath done, and in avoiding the evil that he hath not done. For over a hundred years DR ARMAND JOHN DEROSSET, father and son, has been prominent for good in this town With the exception of a few years, a DR. DEROSSET has been for sixty years Senior Warden of this Parish. Of the late DR. DEROSSET forty-two children, grand-children and great grand-children have been baptized in this Church.

The humble saints of God lead their obscure lives, doing each his or her duty, as he or she is placed. They are known to God, and they will get their crowns from Him. But it is the marked men—the men of talent and position—who must furnish examples for others, who must shoulder the responsibility of leading others up the high and holy path of duty.

DR. DEROSSET was a marked man in many ways.

First, In the mere fact of long life. Few men celebrate their ninetieth birth-day. His life has well nigh spanned the century, and such a century! Think of the changes he has seen, of the contrasts he has witnessed! He was the oldest citizen of our town, the oldest graduate of the

University, the oldest railroad director in unbroken service, probably, in the United States. He was the oldest of our vestry, and, may be, the oldest continuous Senior Warden and member of the General Convention in the whole Church. His children, and his children's children, aye, and his children's children's children have risen up to call him blessed.

Again, ARMAND J. DEROSSET was always among the first, wherever that might be. He was among the first in school and college. He was for years the leading merchant in Wilmington. He was of the first in every enterprise making for the welfare of his native city. He was among the first in the work and council of his church—in the Parish, in the Diocese, in the United States.

What are the special points in this prominent character that we can dwell on this morning for the guidance and the strengthening of our rising generation?

First, Earnestness, devotion to the work in hand. The men of zeal and energy have made this earth what we see it to-day. They have cheered the faint hearted, and spurred on the slothful; they have sailed the seas, crossed the deserts, and climbed the mountains; they have been the prime factors in human progress and

civilization, ever leading this dull world upward and onward.

DR. DEROSSET was an earnest and energetic man. No lukewarm indifference chilled his soul or checked the ardor of those who followed him. In every enterprise his energy and industry offered a stirring example to his business compeers. Earnest devotion to the cause before him marked his career as citizen and director in material enterprises. When failure threatened the great undertaking—great indeed in those days—of building and conducting one of the first and longest railroads in the world, he had the heart and nerve to cross the ocean, seek foreign capitalists, and win their help and co-operation.

The same strong qualities he displayed in his christian life and church relations. He believed that a christian man must be a member of Christ's Church; and he believed, furthermore, that a member of the church ought to be active and interested in the Lord's work. He showed his fellows that a man could be a successful, busy merchant, and at the same time an active, busy churchman. The man most full of earthly affairs was the man who always had time to be at a Vestry meeting or in the Diocesan Council or in the General Convention.

Secondly, Men naturally admire generosity

and disinterestedness. We honor the man who is not always counting the dollars and cents that come from his every act. We are moved by the man who can render service to his fellow men, and yet refuse to be paid in money for it. Few are the men who will undertake a business negotiation, requiring tact and skill and labor, will give up their own business for months, will save a large enterprise from failure, and, then, refuse all recompense for that service.

DR. DEROSSET did this in two well known instances. He sailed to England in 1849 to negotiate the exchange of Wilmington and Weldon bonds for railroad iron; and again in 1865 to extend the time for the payment of these bonds.

The same generous spirit made him a liberal giver to the Church. He was a generous and systematic contributor to all the expenses of the Parish. The work of education and charity, for which this congregation is especially noted in this community, would hardly have been begun, had it not been for the munificence of our revered Senior Warden.

Thirdly, Courage and perseverance are qualities that distinguish the great of the earth. The leaders of men are those who will not give way to disaster, but face adverse fortune, and beat her

back with fearless hand. When business failure comes upon old men, they are generally overwhelmed by the shock. They scarcely ever go to work again, and become dependent on their children.

Not so with him we are now delighting to honor. Business disaster did not overpower and conquer him. He held on his way unshaken. He would work on still, and be independent to the end of life; and the merchant prince did not disdain to mend his broken fortunes, to seek the lowly position of a clerk, and to perform its duties most zealously for ten long years. When I used to meet that courtly old gentleman going with bright face and springy step to his humble work, I took off my hat; and I felt he deserved a deeper reverence than when he strode along our streets, the most powerful man of business on the wharf.

Fourthly, What is a merchant's crowning glory? What makes him a stimulating, uplifting, influence in any community? It is his integrity. Honesty is to the merchant what virtue is to a woman, what honor is to a gentleman, what holiness is to a priest. Said a gentleman to me the other day, "When I think of the dishonesty so common in trade, when I learn of the short cuts that men are making to get money, when I am confronted by fail-

ures in business that mean failures in character, when I begin to lose heart and wonder what we are coming to; then, I am stayed and strengthened by the thought of two men in our city: they are, Mr. DAVID WORTH and DR. DEROSSET."

It does help and strengthen us, my friends, to see a man standing straight and fearless, when so many about him are dodging and trimming. It is ennobling to see a man of seventy-five, surrounded through all his long life with every comfort that wealth can give, holding his good name higher than all earthly riches, giving up his property without reservation or equivocation. DR. DEROSSET stood there, in such times as try men's souls, in such junctures as show what stuff they are made of, and proved himiself a Hugonot indeed, a worthy son of those noble men, who faced sword and flame and exile rather than deny their faith; men whom kings could not move, men whom the rack could not break, men whom gold could not buy.

Lastly, our honored fellow citizen, our beloved Senior Warden was a witness to men and angels of the beauty and strength of the Christian faith. Longer than most men live, in larger proportion than most men have, DR. DEROSSET was rich and prosperous. All that time, he was a

humble Christian, as much interested in the increase of his Christian influence as in the success of his business ventures.

When earthly misfortune fell upon him, he turned more closely to his Father in Heaven, when earthly riches faded, the heavenly treasures grew more precious. His faith in God and right guided him in his days of prosperity ; his faith in God and His love comforted him in his time of adversity. His love for his Saviour, and his hope for the eternal joys held out to them who love and serve God cheered him in the long hours of his delayed departure, soothed him under his prolonged suffering, made him brave as he so slowly went down into the dark valley. "What would I, what could I do without faith in my Saviour," he would say to me. When I would whisper, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us," he would answer, "Yes, yes; thank God, thank God."

Fellow men, the power of character, the power of faith, the power of Christ Jesus, are realities in this present day world of ours. Let us seek for it, let us pray for it, let us exercise it. May we all learn the lessons I have tried to teach from the character of God's noble servant who has

just gone to his reward. They are : earnest zeal, disinterested service, persevering courage, spotless integrity, simple faith. May we so live that when our time of departure cometh, we may, like him, pass from earth to Paradise ; having "the testimony of a good conscience ; in the communion of the Catholic church ; in the confidence of a certain faith ; in the comfort of a reasonable, religious and holy hope ; in favour with our God, and in perfect charity with the world."